Pennsylvania’s vast state forest system comprises 2.2 million acres for you to use, enjoy and explore. The Department of Conservation and Natural Resources’ Bureau of Forestry manages these forests to ensure their long-term health and to conserve native wild plants.

Elk State Forest comprises 217,000 acres in Cameron, Elk, Potter, McKean, Clinton, and Clearfield Counties.

Pine Tree Trail

The Pine Tree Trail is part of the Pine Tree Natural Area which is a 276 acre stand of old field growth white pine. This trail received its name from the stand of white pine located on the upper portion of the trail. The stand of pines is neither virgin nor true old growth timber, but is very large in size.

When the first settlers entered this area, the forest was mostly hemlock and white pine with a scattering of oaks and other hardwoods like cherry, white ash, maple, beech and chestnut. The harvesting of the white pine and hemlock, and later, the hardwoods, had a profound influence on the composition of the forest of today. Faster growing hardwoods that survived wildfires thrive and are dominant today.

In the mid 1800’s the area now growing in large white pine trees was cleared by settlers for farming. The small stream bed you will cross provided a source of water. The trail up the slope was a wagon road to the settlers dwelling. Traces of the stone foundation can be seen along the trail.

After the clearing was abandoned, seed from adjacent pine trees was carried by the wind to the fields. White pine is a pioneer species and grows well in full sun. In the abandoned fields the pines became established and grew rapidly, eventually dominating the site and shading out all sunlight. Other species were unable to become established in the deep shade. Thus the old field is now pure white pine.

The white pine stand occupies about twelve acres and averages over fourteen thousand board feet of timber per acre. Most of the trees have between 5 and 6 sixteen foot logs.

Through the efforts of the Bureau of Forestry and the Youth Conservation Corps crews of 1977 and 1979 this area was converted to an interpretive trail.

Directions

To access the trail from RT555 turn onto Hicks Run Road and then turn left onto West Hicks Run Road and turn left into the Hicks Run Campground - park at the designated trail parking.

Trail Information

The trail is a hiking only trail and marked in yellow.

From the main trailhead of the interpretative trail (at the campground) around the loop and returning is 1.75 miles.

The East Hicks Run section of the interpretative trail is 0.45 miles. The elevation difference between the trailhead at Hicks Run Campground and the highest point on the interpretative trail is 500 feet.

Care for the Land

State forests belong to all Pennsylvanians. Take time to enjoy them, but know the rules and regulations designed to protect the forests and you. Please be careful with fire, keep our forests litter free and don’t damage trees and other plants.

Certified “Well Managed”

Pennsylvania state forests are certified to FSC® standards. The Forest Stewardship Council® is an independent organization supporting environmentally appropriate, socially beneficial, and economically viable management of the world’s forests.

iConservePA

To learn more about the state’s natural resources and what you can do to help protect and enjoy them, log onto iConservePA.org.
9. Eastern Hemlock — The official state tree of Pennsylvania. It is an evergreen conifer and is one of the most valuable wildlife foods.

10. Quaking Aspen — This is a medium-sized tree that grows rapidly and is often one of the first trees to become established on disturbed sites. Aspen bark and branches are favored as food by deer, elk, and turkeys. Buds on aspen twigs are eaten by rabbits, deer, and elk. Buds on aspen twigs are eaten by rabbits, deer, and elk.

11. Black Birch — This is a deciduous tree that is common in the forests of northern Pennsylvania. It is known for its vibrant fall foliage. The bark and twigs produce a reddish pigment that is valued in making birch beer.

12. Black Cherry — This tree is known locally as rock oak, and it is frequently found on disturbed sites. It is valuable because of its hard, durable wood, which is used for fence posts, railroad ties, poles, and mine timbers.

13. Red Maple — This tree is known for its vibrant fall foliage. The bark and twigs produce a reddish pigment that is valued in making birch beer.

14. White Oak — This is a very large deciduous tree that is common in the hardwood forest. Its wood is excellent for fence posts, railroad ties, poles, and mine timbers because it is resistant to rotting and disease.

15. Sugar Maple — This is a medium-sized tree that is known as hard maple, and it supplies the best sap for making maple syrup and sugar. The wood is hard and durable, and it is used for bowling lanes, furniture, and flooring. The brilliant fall foliage is well known.

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